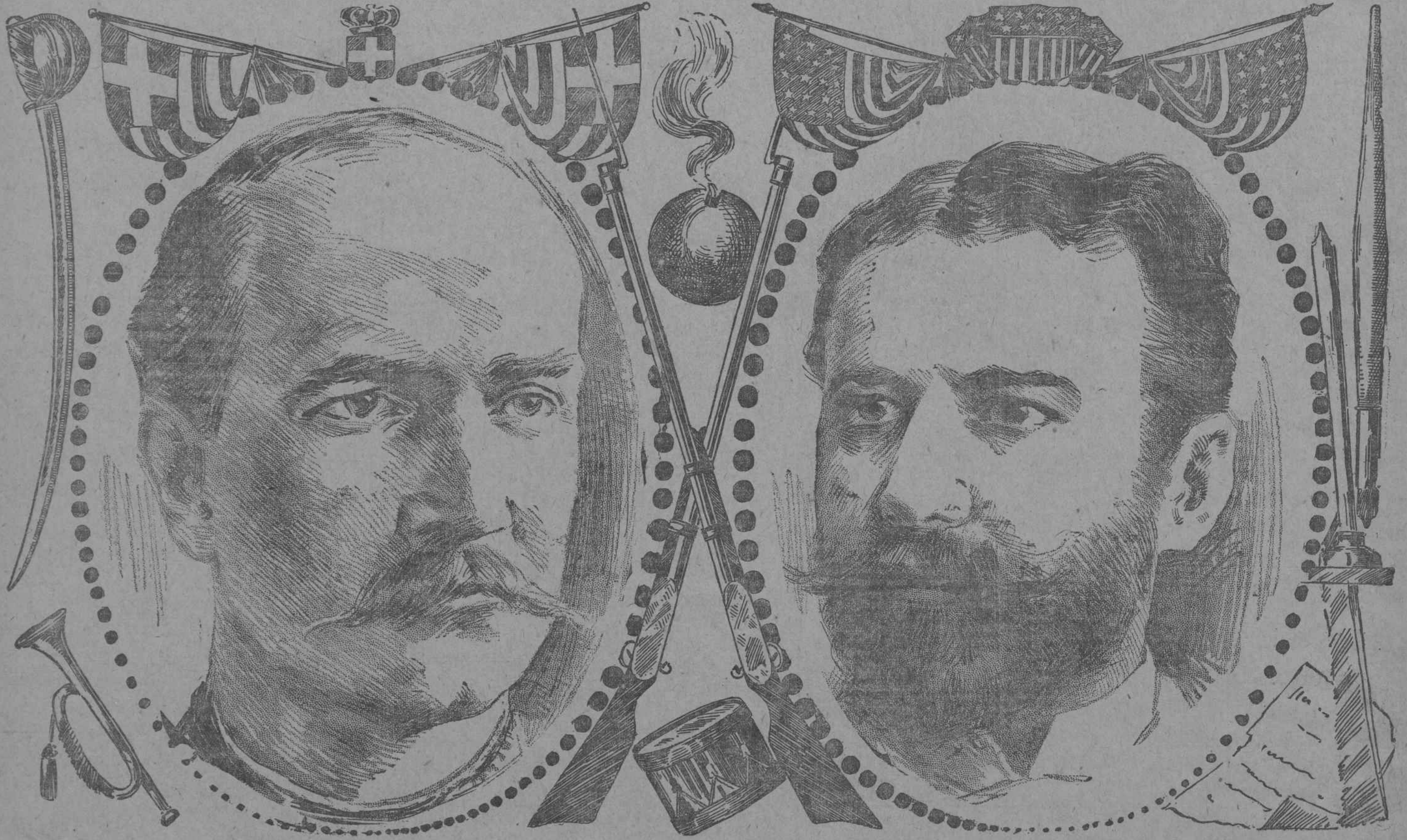


KING GEORGE OF GREECE TALKS FOR THE JOURNAL ABOUT CRETE.

Brave Monarch Who Has Incurred the Displeasure of Six Powers for Protecting Christians Receives Our Commisioner at Athens. Greece Cannot Submit Without Incurring Risk of the Greatest Massacre of Modern Times---Does Not Blame Sultan, but Places Responsibility on the Powers.



King George of Greece, Who Defies the Powers of Europe.

James Creelman, the Journal's Commissioner at Athens.

By James Creelman.
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ATHENS, March 4. —King George received me at the palace this morning and spoke with absolute frankness in reply to the arrogant tyranny of the six great European powers. It was like encountering a Crusader of old to meet this slender, hard-eyed Dane, who has picked the cross of Christ from under the bloody feet of Islamism and held it aloft like a King. He has put Europe to shame by his courage and humanity.

Greece Will Absolutely Refuse to Withdraw.

I CAN SAY THAT GREECE WILL ABSOLUTELY REFUSE TO WITHDRAW HER ARMY AND NAVY FROM CRETE. THAT IS QUITE CERTAIN. I KNOW, ALSO, THAT THE GREAT POWERS HAVE DECIDED TO WITHDRAW THEIR LEGATIONS FROM ATHENS IF AT THE END OF SIX DAYS GREECE HAS NOT COMPLIED WITH THEIR IMPERIOUS COMMAND.

What they will do then no man knows. The ultimatum simply means that the powers, having fired on the Christian flag in aid of the Turks, now propose to humiliate Greece for having dared to arrest the murderous sway of Mohammedanism.

The door to the King's room was guarded by a one-armed soldier, wearing a white Greek shirt. As I entered I saw the King standing in the middle of the vast chamber—a slight, graceful man, in a quiet, blue uniform. He was alone, and as I approached he stretched out his hand and greeted me with unaffected and hearty courtesy. He looked pale and worn, the result of his unceasing labors.

Surrender Would Invite Appalling Massacre.

"I CANNOT SEE HOW GREECE CAN ALTER HER COURSE," HE SAID, "IN SPITE OF WHAT THE POWERS SAY. IF THE GREEK TROOPS WERE TO BE WITHDRAWN FROM CRETE THERE WOULD BE THE GREATEST MASSACRE OF MODERN TIMES. IT IS APPALLING TO THINK OF WHAT WOULD FOLLOW.

"The Cretans themselves will refuse to accept the proposal of the powers to create a principality. They will fight to the last against it, and will rather perish in the attempt to establish their liberties and rights than submit to the new form of oppression.

"If Greece should withdraw her forces from Crete it would simply mean the abandonment of the island to barbarous and indiscriminate slaughter.

"The Admirals of the fleet have an idea that they can restore order in Crete by proclamation and threats. Cretan Christians have already seen that the powers, having abandoned them to massacre and pillage for years, ruthlessly fired on the Christian flag and assisted the Turks while they were attacking the Christian camp."

Words cannot describe the King at this moment. His slight figure seemed to grow taller as he spoke, and his long, sensitive countenance shone with enthusiasm. His soul was in his eyes. No man could have seen and heard him say without emotion as he stood there—a blond Norse hero leading the Greeks against the common enemy of civilization:

"The powers threaten to use all the force they have against us if we refuse to comply with their ultimatum. It is six nations against one. But what have the powers done to deserve the right of directing affairs now?

Does Not Hold the Sultan Responsible.

"I say emphatically that the Sultan of Turkey has no responsibility for the existing state of things in Crete. I hold the Sultan to be free from blame in this respect.

"Nine months ago the Sultan granted to the powers authority to put reforms into effect. What have these six nations done to end the horrors and atrocities of the Cretan war of extermination?

"Nothing; absolutely nothing!

"The situation was horrible. No civilized nation could endure or tolerate it. The great powers say that they want peace; but is every nation to have peace but Greece? We, too, want peace; and the powers have refused to act except when they fired a few days ago on the Christian flag.

"Think of the situation. Every year we have thousands of men, women and children flying to our shores and begging us, with tears in their eyes, to save them from starvation and protect their helpless relatives in Crete from mutilation and death. What civilized nation would continue year after year to turn a deaf ear to these prayers, and to tax its people to support multitudes of innocent, suffering refugees?

"Greece has something like 20,000 subjects in Crete, and the great powers say that she has no right to land troops to protect them, although six nations, which have only a handful of subjects on the island have landed their forces.

"The powers are not exerting themselves on behalf of justice, humanity or Christianity. Their sole object is to prove that when they have given an order, regardless of its merits, it must be obeyed.

Cretans Will Never Consent to the Proposal of the Powers.

"The proposal of the powers will never be accepted by the Cretans. If the Admirals had not landed their forces on the island peace and government might have been established before now by the Greek army.

"The foreign consuls in Crete seem to act just as they please, and are bent upon upholding Islamism. If the powers wish to secure peace and good government, why have they not proposed autonomy under Greek protection, as they established the autonomy of Bosnia and Herzegovina under Austrian protection?

"The situation in Macedonia, too, is very critical. I cannot foretell the future, but the great powers have delivered their message to Greece, and we shall see what the result is to be. The powers have taken upon themselves a great responsibility. They have deliberately offered encouragement to the excited Turks."

"Your Majesty," I said, "if Greece stands firm in the face of this European threat, the humane sentiment and moral indignation of the British, French and Italian peoples would sweep their Ministers out of power."

"We shall see," said the King, "we have six days in which to act."

Greece Will Smash the European Concert if She Persists.

My suggestion to the King is founded upon my knowledge of the fact that the six powers are not thoroughly in accord, and that if Greece stands to the task to which she has set her hands she will smash the European concert beyond all hope of resurrection.

POSTSCRIPT—The Greek Cabinet met this afternoon and discussed the ultimatum of the powers. Greece will absolutely decline to yield her rights, and will reject the proposal of the European concert.

There is no division of opinion in the Ministry. The Greek reply will be made to-morrow or the following day. The whole nation is united behind its king and his Cabinet.

The feeling against the powers is rising every hour in Athens. The barber of the German Minister has refused to shave him. Servants in the hotels decline to serve Germans.

To-morrow there will be an immense popular demonstration in front of the palace to urge the King to stand by his flag. Fresh Greek troops have been sent to Crete. A Cretan merchant brought a boatload of oil to Piræus and declined to pay customs duties on the ground that Crete is Greek territory. The Minister of Finance has decided that the merchant is right.

The Ministry has received a telegram announcing that, in spite of the foreign Admirals, three steamers loaded with food and ammunition for the Greek troops have discharged their cargoes at Crete.

Vassos's gallant little army is now supplied for three months in case a blockade is declared, and cannot be starved into surrender.